

# Amber Alerts Save Lives

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You've probably heard a broadcast or seen the digital signs on the interstate. When a child is missing — TV, radio and the highway department kick into gear and general public supplements law enforcement eyes by watching for the missing child. Now, that well-oiled system extends to other types of missing persons.

**AmberAlert** is the law enforcement system used to report and recover missing children. When a child is missing, a parent will usually notify law enforcement after exhausting their search. When appropriate, the SC State Law Enforcement Division (SLED) is involved. When appropriate, SLED involves broadcast and electronic media. The highway department is notified and, when driving is suspected, highway signs are activated. By involving the general public, the child is usually spotted within hours, leading to a quicker rescue.

Since **AmberAlert** began in 1994, hundreds of children have been recovered and returned safely to their parents. Using the system and technology already in place, this alert system has been expanded to include other missing persons in need. While most are aware of **AmberAlert**, many are unaware of two other important alert programs – Endangered Persons Advisory and BlueAlert.

We have all heard the troubling stories of individuals afflicted with dementia, Alzheimer's or mental handicaps wandering off, even driving off, and becoming hopelessly lost. This often ends in tragedy because authorities simply don't have sufficient personnel to adequately search for this type of missing person. An **Endangered Persons Advisory**, enacted in South Carolina in 2010, assists law enforcement in safely returning someone with cognitive impairment. When this type of person is reported missing, the same **AmberAlert** system may be used.

**BlueAlert** was just passed unanimously and signed into South Carolina law. This alert occurs when a law enforcement officer is assaulted, shot or kidnapped and the assailant is still at-large. Guidelines are currently being created to enlist broadcasters to quickly communicate information on a suspect. Electronic highway signs may also be involved.

The South Carolina Sheriff's Association (SCSA) played an integral role in getting these programs in place for South Carolina and today SLED manages the operation of all three programs. The Executive Director of SCSA, Jeff Moore, is the recently-appointed 2012 Chairman of South Carolina's Oversight Committee for the orderly management of these three alert programs.

This is who we are and what we do.

## What to do if a person you love is missing

- Don't panic. You need to be calm to be effective.
- Make a list of everyone you need to contact (this helps later if you need to call off the search)
- Call family, friends, neighbors, teachers/associates of the missing person on your list and ask if they've seen the missing person. Ask those you call to call others to widen the net. Ask callers to report back to you and stay close to your phone to receive those calls.
- Call your local Sheriff's Office and provide details (a recent photo, where last seen, what they were wearing, what they had on their person, if they take medications, any mental or physical characteristics or impairments, etc).
- Distribute flyers or posters around your neighborhood and in the areas where last spotted.